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## News Release

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### Work continues at Spring Valley

**WASHINGTON, DC**--The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, will complete its second week of intrusive work for the current investigation for chemical warfare materials at one property on Glenbrook Road in the Spring Valley neighborhood.

On April 7, ordnance specialists uncovered an intact severely corroded three-inch Stokes mortar. After removing it from the pit, it was transported at the end of the work day to federal property, where it was tested for content using the sophisticated Portable Isotopic Neutron Spectroscopy (PINS) system. Contents were identified as an obscuring smoke mixture from the World War I era. The mortar round will remain in the Interim Holding Facility on federal property until it is moved to its final destination for disposal.

In addition to the Stokes mortar, a clear glass, two-liter jar containing 20 milliliters of an undetermined liquid was found. The jar was packed and transported to the IHF where it will remain until it's transported to Edgewood, Md., for testing. Also found were various types of empty glass containers possibly used in a laboratory, and debris items that included broken glass and metal, an empty 75mm shell, a wooden Stokes mortar training aid, parts of a protective mask canister and a metal watering can.

Generally, work progressed at a slower pace during the second week because of a large tree root located in the excavation pit. However, by Friday, ordnance experts from Aberdeen, Md., had dug to a depth of four feet over the entire 10'-by-14' location. A total of seventy-four 55-gallon drums of excavated soil have been removed and transported to the federal property, where sample testing took place. No chemical warfare materials were detected in any of the tested soil samples.

Digging will continue at this first of two locations to a maximum depth of 10 feet or until chemical warfare materials and/or breakdown products are discovered. Work at the first location should be completed by April 16. Work at the second location is scheduled to begin by late April and completed in May.

During a 1997 review of the Operation Safe Removal project, the Corps determined that the Glenbrook Road property should be further investigated. Historical documents indicated the possibility of a disposal pit of 5-gallon mustard and/or lewisite containers. In February 1998 the Corps conducted a geophysical survey of the Glenbrook site to identify any soil disturbances or the presence of metallic objects that would require an intrusive investigation. During the survey, 11 anomalies were identified. Two could not be easily explained, and were indicative of possible burial pits for chemical warfare material.

Operation Safe Removal was a three-year investigation from 1993-1995 by the Corps in the Spring Valley area to determine if buried ordnance and explosive waste and hazardous substances still existed at this formerly used defense site known as American University Experiment Station. From 1917 to 1920 military personnel conducted research on and performed small-scale testing of chemical warfare items at the experiment station.

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**Note: The media will not be allowed at the actual site of the digging. Any media wishing interviews or file footage should call the Corps' Spring Valley office at 202-686-3154 or 3359.**